

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4687
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 2821

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, PEPR, PINS, DR

SUB: WHY DELAY IN THE VOTE COUNT?

1. TENSION WAS EASED AND CONFIDENCE RESTORED WHEN THE
CENTRAL ELECTORAL BOARD (JCE) WAS ALLOWED TO RESUME
ITS WORK OF TABULATING THE VOTE LAST THURSDAY, MAY 18.
GIVE OR TAKE A FEW CASES OF THE NERVOUS FLUTTERS,
CAUSED BY THE ROILING FLOW OF RUMORS, THAT CONDITION
HAS BEEN MAINTAINED BY DOMINICANS WHO MORE OR LESS PATIENTLY
AWAIT THE RESULTS. THE PRD HAS THUS FAR NOT PRESSED THE ISSUE
OF THE DELAY, THOUGH PRD PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE GUZMAN TODAY
EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN ABOUT IT.

2. AT THE SAME TIME, EIGHT DAYS HAVE PASSED SINCE
THE ELECTIONS AND PUBLIC ATTENTION, BOTH HERE AND
ABROAD, WONDERS WHY THERE IS SUCH A DELAY IN COMING
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UP WITH THE FINAL COUNT. THE SLOWNESS OF THE PROCESS
ALSO QUITE NATURALLY HAS RAISED SOME SUSPICIONS.

3. EMBASSY REPORTING OVER THIS PERIOD HAS INDIRECTLY
TOUCHED ON THIS QUESTION, BUT WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD
NOW ADDRESS IT DIRECTLY, ESPECIALLY SINCE WE FACE AT

LEAST ANOTHER TWO DAYS OF WAITING BEFORE A WINNER IS DECLARED, IF THAT IS TO HAPPEN.

4. THE DOMINICAN ELECTORAL LAW CONTAINS NUMEROUS SAFEGUARDS AGAINST FRAUD. IT PROVIDES AMPLE OPPORTUNITY FOR ELECTORAL FINDINGS AT EACH LAYER OF THE VOTING SYSTEM-THE PRECINCT (MESA), AND CITIES AND PROVINCES (MUNICIPIOS) TO BE REVIEWED FOR IRREGULARITIES AT THE NEXT HIGHEST LEVEL OF THESE ELECTORAL ENTITIES.

5. THESE SAFEGUARDS HAVE ALSO SERVED TO DELAY THE VOTE TABULATION PROCESS.

6. THE DOMINICAN MILITARY'S PRE-DAWN INTERRUPTION OF THE VOTE-COUNTING ON MAY 17 IMPOSED A HIATUS ON THE VOTE-COUNTING THAT LASTED UNTIL THE MORNING OF THURSDAY, MAY 18, IN SOME PLACES, WE UNDERSTAND THE COUNTING DID RESUME BUT AT OTHER IT DID NOT; PROBABLY LITTLE VOTE-COUNTING GOT ONE THAT DAY IN THE CONTINUING GENERAL CONFUSION CAUSED BY HARASSMENT OF ELECTORAL OFFICIALS, BOTH BY THE MILITARY, AMONG WHOM THERE WERE THOSE WHO DIDN'T GET THE WORD OR WHO DIDN'T OBEY IT, AND BY CIVILIAN REFORMISTAS, WHO WE KNOW WERE PRETTY STEAMED UP. THE NATION ALSO WAS PARALYZED BY THE ELECTRIC NEWS
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THAT BALAGUER WAS GOING ON TV TO ADDRESS HIMSELF TO THE SITUATION AND TO INDICATE WHAT WAS TO COME NEXT, WHICH HE DID AT ABOUT 11:15.

7. THUS THE FIRST DAY OF SERIOUS WORK AT MOST MUNICIPAL BOARDS WAS FRIDAY, MAY 15, WHEN MANY WERE ABLE TO COMPLETE OR NEARLY COMPLETE THEIR COUNTS; WORKING THROUGH THE WEEKEND, 52 OF THE 85 MUNICIPAL BOARDS GOT THEIR OFFICIALS TALLIES IN TO THE CENTRAL JCE. ACCORDING TO THE ELECTION LAW, THEIR WORK MUST BE TERMINATED IN THREE DAYS UNLESS "NOT POSSIBLE FOR INSUPERABLE REASONS".

8. THE WORK OF THE MUNICIPAL BOARDS INVOLVES MORE THAN JUST ADDING UP THE TOTALS OF THE MESAS. EACH BOARD IS OBLIGED TO GO THROUGH EACH VOTE WHICH WAS ANNULLED AT EACH MESA AND CONFIRM OR REVOKE THE MESA'S DECISION; THERE ARE OVER 5,500 MESAS IN THE NATION. EVEN MORE TIME-CONSUMING IS THE COUNTING OF THE SO-CALLED "OBSERVED VOTES." THESE ARE VOTES WHICH WERE CHALLENGED BY A POLL-WATCHER OF A PARTICULAR PARTY OR FOR SOME OTHER REASON SET ASIDE FOR SPECIAL SCRUTINY. THE MUNICIPAL BOARD MUST ALSO GO THROUGH THESE ONE BY

ONE TO DECIDE WHETHER THEY ARE ADMISSABLE.

9. THIS MAY SERVE TO EXPLAIN WHY THE VOTE COUNT HAS TAKEN LONGER IN THE BIGGER URBAN MUNICIPALITIES, WHERE THE MESAS' LIST OF REGISTERED VOTERS IS LARGER AND THE "OBSERVED VOTES" MORE NUMEROUS. FOR INSTANCE THE FINAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL DISTRICT HAS NOT YET BEEN TRANSMITTED TO THE CENTRAL JCE BECAUSE OF THE SLOW PROCESS OF SCUTINIZING SOME 17,000 "OBSERVED VOTES". THESE VOTES WERE NOT YET INCLUDED IN THE TOTALS GIVEN IN SANTO DOMINGO 2730.

10. OBVIOUSLY OTHER FACTORS CAUSED A DELAY IN THE WORK OF MUNICIPAL BOARDS.WHEN THE MILITARY INTERVENED MANY CONFIDENTIAL

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MEMBERS OF LOCAL BOARDS WENT INTO HIDING AND WERE RELUCTANT TO COME OUT TO RESUME THEIR LABORS IMMEDIATELY ON MAY 18, IN MANY CASES FOR GOOD REASON GIVEN VARYING SECURITY CONDITIONS AND ATTITUDES OF MILITARY COMMANDERS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. THERE CONTINUE TO BE REPORTS OF ABNORMAL PRESSURES ON LOCAL ELECTORAL BOARDS FROM PRD LEADERS AND LOCAL PRESS CORRESPONDENTS IN VILLA ALTAGRACIA, AZUA, SAN FRANCISCO DE MACORIS, SAN PEDRO DE MACORIS, NAGUA AND SEVERAL SMALLAR TOWNS. EMBASSY IS NOT IN A POSITION AT THIS POINT TO ASSESS DEGREE TO WHICH VOTE TABULATIONS IN THESE LOCALES MAY HAVE BEEN DELAYED OR ALTERED DUE TO SUCH PRESSURES, BUT WE HAVE TO FACTOR THAT INTO OUR JUDGMENT OF WHY THE DELAY. WE NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT IN A TV INTERVIEW YESTERDAY PRD PARTY PRESIDENT SALVADOR JORGE BLANCO WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE PRD WOULD INCREASE ITS LEAD WHEN THE REPORTS CAME IN FROM THE REMAINING 32 MUNICIPALITIES. THIS WAS BECAUSE THE FIRST REPORTS COMING IN TO THE JCE WERE FROM FRONTIER AND RURAL MUNICIPALITIES "WHERE THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS ARE HARDER TO PROTECT." HE FELT THE RESULTS COMING IN FROM THE LARGER CITIES STILL OUTSTANDING WOULD BE FAVORABLE TO HIS PARTY.

11. IN ANY EVENT THE JCE SAYS IT IS WAITING TO GET IN THE REMAINING 32 MUNICIPAL BOARD REPORTS BEFORE IT RESUMES ITS TABULATION. IT HAS GOTTEN IN ABOUT 20 OF THESE AND, ACCORDING TO PRESS NOW SAYS IT WILL RESUME NATIONAL VOTE TABULATION ON FIRDAY (TOMORROW IS CORPUS CHRISTI DAY HERE) YOST

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